

Exchanging the Past: A Rainforest World of Before and After, by Bruce M Knaft. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. ISBN cloth, 0-226-44634-4; paper, 0-226-44635-2; x + 303 pages, tables, figures, map, photographs, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, US\$55.00; paper, US\$20.00.

Bruce Knaft, Samuel C Dobbs Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Vernacular Modernities Program at Emory University's Institute for Comparative and International Studies, is a distinguished anthropologist. He completed his PhD at the University of Michigan after research among the Gebusi of the Western Province in Papua New Guinea. This research formed the basis for his important book, *Good Company and Violence: Sorcery and Social Action in a Lowland New Guinea Society* (1985). *Exchanging the Past* is a book about social and cultural change based on six months of research when Knaft revisited the site of his first research some sixteen years later (in 1998). The first research was in what was then—and is now to a somewhat lesser extent—a remote part of Papua New Guinea. As Knaft says about his first research, "And if the Gebusi were traditional, so was I. A fledgling researcher, I had bought fully into anthropology's classic lure: to study a people as remote and little contacted as possible" (11). The first research did, as Knaft points out, provide him with an important baseline for his study of social change.

The anthropological approach in this book is different from his earlier analysis of the Gebusi lifeworld. His

new arguments were tried out in numerous venues. In the acknowledgments, he thanks his "present and former graduate students; they are my true colleagues at Emory and beyond. They have given me the courage, not just to teach anthropology from the heart but to go back to the field and learn it all over again" (x). We should expect then a very different sort of book from his earlier ethnography, and indeed we get it. The topic is of course different, but so too are the style of presentation and the ways in which the author is located in the text. We are given more of his reactions to events and people (see, for instance, the prelude, the beginning of chapter 1, and the afterword). Chapter 5 is particularly interesting in this regard. It begins with a personal recounting of experience and relationship between the author and a dying man. It starts: "A certain depth comes from the eyes of a man who knows his death throes are starting" (119). Then, from page 125 to the end of the chapter, Knaft returns to a style reminiscent of his earlier work, with more structured description and numerical data presented in bar graphs. This stylistic movement occurs elsewhere in the book as well.

The book is organized into nine chapters, a prelude, an afterword, and twenty-four pages of notes. Readers are advised to attend closely to the notes; much about the project is revealed in them. The prelude sets the scene of the new research and the author's positioning to place and some people. The short afterword deals with the author's reactions to events and people as well as the research on the day of departure.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 deal with the “before” and “after” of the title. The practices and beliefs surrounding sorcerers and their executions in the past, the decline in sorcery accusations now, and how the new location of the research site (closer to an administrative center) came about are considered, respectively. In chapter 1, Knauft also presents his perspective for this project. It involves the Gebusi becoming alternatively modern through a mix of the traditional and the modern. For the Gebusi of Gasumi Corners, he writes, “This perspective foregrounds experiences that pulse with ambivalent desires, contradictory goals, and conflicting images” (19).

Chapters 4 through 7 deal with the organized institutional forms of modernity, their personnel, and Gebusi reactions to them. The village in which Knauft worked was called Gasumi by the colonial government, based on its prior name. In 1980 its inhabitants called it Yibihilu, or the “place of deep water” (68). By 1996, it had become a hamlet much closer to the airstrip and administrative center of Nomad and had the name Gasumi Corners. From there, its people encountered police (chapter 4), Christianity in terms of its relationship to the demise of sorcery vengeance (chapter 5), and the forms of the churches and their places in Gebusi cosmologies of the present (chapter 6).

I found the topic of chapter 7, education, particularly important. In schooling there is a sustained impact on the students. Discipline and the organization of time are some of the potential results of this continuous exposure. In many parts of Papua

New Guinea, schooling is also closely related to notions concerning the achievement of new desires. Chapter 8 puts these institutional contacts into experiential frameworks. It also further develops the central notion of what Knauft calls “recessive agency.”

The saturation of sociology and anthropology with agency, as the author points out (255, note 28), emerges from the work on structuration theory by the now Professor Lord Anthony Giddens. Agency refers to the action of individuals that has effect on institutions, and when the reverse—that is, the effect of institutional structures on individuals—is considered in addition, the process is called structuration. Gebusi agency observed by Knauft in relation to structures of modernity is what he terms “recessive agency.” This is a core concept for the book. Gebusi actively engage in submissive behavior, some of them in the hope of achieving some of the desired treasures of modernity. It is a sort of intentional submissiveness.

Knauft tries to explain why this is, in fact, agency, but I am not sure he is successful. While it certainly appears that Gebusi act submissively in various situations, without much more elaboration of circumstances and details of actions his attempt to develop a notion of this behavior as “recessive agency” begins to dissolve. It appears at once too general in covering a wide range of possibly different behaviors and too limiting in precluding a variety of possible perspectives. Of course, the notion of recessive agency cannot be dismissed. It may be an interesting and useful way to view cultural change among

the Gebusi. Here, though, it is underdeveloped. It certainly seems inadequate as a core idea for this book.

There are other problems.

Although it is valuable to deal with unique cases of change in a detailed way, the lack of generalization and comparison make the book less interesting for those with more general interests in social change in the Pacific. Even the unique case is marred by focusing exclusively on a small part of a small population—about 121 at the focal community of Gasumi Corners out of a total of about 615 Gebusi. The other approximately 494 people live further from Nomad and apparently have a somewhat less continuous or intense encounter with the institutions of modernity. Also, the brief discussion of time needs much further development to be convincing.

It should be clear that I find the book a disappointment after Knauff's previous excellent ethnographic and theoretical work. Despite all my misgivings regarding style, problem, and argument, I would still suggest reading this book for a glimpse of some changes in a remote part of Papua New Guinea.

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Identity and Development: Tongan Culture, Agriculture, and the Perenniality of the Gift, by Paul van der Grijp. Leiden: KITLV Press, 2004. ISBN 90-6718-215-X; x + 225 pages, tables, figures, maps, notes, bibliography, index. €35.00.

Paul van der Grijp's *Identity and Development* is an important contribution to the growing literature on the incorporation of world-system institutions into Tongan culture and economy. It is a significant monograph-length treatment of cash crop production and its results over the last ten years (for squash pumpkin) to twenty years (for vanilla and bananas). To a lesser extent the book also deals with migration, aid, and remittances, the other key elements of the monetized parts of the contemporary Tongan economy. The work explicitly emphasizes the value of ethnographic and empirical work in these areas, goes some way to contributing ethnographic data to the literature, and uses a number of case studies to critically appraise the utility of a number of other works.

Two major themes animate the monograph. First, van der Grijp is concerned to undermine the use and abuse of the MIRAB (Migration, Remittances, Aid, and Bureaucracy) model currently in vogue for describing Tonga and many other Pacific Island economies. The author also seeks to challenge the notions that Tongan culture is either an unchanged and unchanging product of tradition, or a simple reproduction of capitalist ideology and practice. The vehicle for accomplishing these ends is, oddly, a protracted discussion of the role of